1 2 3 FILED CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT 4 5 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CDO 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 10 June 2023 Grand Jury 11 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CR No. 2:23-CR-00382(A)-FLA 12 F I R S U P I N D S T E R I C Plaintiff, $\frac{S}{T}$ $\begin{array}{c|cccc} E & D & I & N & G \\ \hline M & E & N & T \end{array}$ 13 v. 14 JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, [18 U.S.C. § 371: Conspiracy; aka "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(1)(A): Engaging aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," 15 in the Business of Dealing in and DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and Manufacturing Firearms Without a 16 BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, License; 18 U.S.C. § 922(e): Delivery of Firearms to Carrier 17 Defendants. Without Written Notice; 18 U.S.C. § 922(q)(5): Unlawful Shipment of 18 Firearms by an Alien; 18 U.S.C. 19 \$924(d)(1)\$ and 28 U.S.C.§ 2461(c): Criminal Forfeiture 20 2.1 22 The Grand Jury charges: 23 COUNT ONE 24 [18 U.S.C. § 371] 25 [ALL DEFENDANTS] 26 INTRODUCTORY ALLEGATION 27 At times relevant to this Indictment, defendants JUAN CARLOS 28 CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka

"Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO
JIMENEZ, did not have a federal firearms license issued by the United
States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives ("ATF"),
and thus were not licensed to import, manufacture, or deal in
firearms.

B. OBJECTS OF THE CONSPIRACY

Beginning on an unknown date, but no later than on or about March 2022, and continuing until at least on or about July 20, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants CRUZ RAMOS, CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and MONTANO JIMENEZ knowingly conspired with others known and unknown to the Grand Jury to commit the following offenses against the United States:

- Engaging in the Business of Dealing in Firearms Without a License, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(a)(1)(A); and
- 2. Delivering Firearms to a Carrier Without Written Notice, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(e).

C. MANNER AND MEANS OF THE CONSPIRACY

The objects of the conspiracy were to be accomplished, in substance, as follows:

- 1. Defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ would control multiple premises, including a storage unit, to manufacture hundreds of AR-15-style firearms.
- 2. Defendant CRUZ RAMOS would manufacture firearms, including AR-15-style firearms, to sell to customers.
- 3. Through text messages and phone calls, defendant CRUZ RAMOS and other co-conspirators would negotiate the sale of the firearms to customers located in Mexico.

- 4. Through text messages, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ would coordinate the pickup and delivery of parts used to manufacture and assemble firearms, including AR-15-style firearms.
- 5. Defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ and other co-conspirators would package firearms for shipment to customers, including customers located in Mexico.
- 6. Defendants CRUZ RAMOS, CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and MONTANO JIMENEZ would transport and deliver parcels containing firearms to freight forwarding companies for shipment to firearms customers located in Mexico.
- 7. The co-conspirators would submit false invoices to the freight forwarding companies, claiming that the gun shipments contained normal household items such as clothes, shoes, and blankets.
- 8. Through text messages and phone calls, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ would coordinate the payment for the parcels containing firearms.
- 9. Defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ would coordinate the pickup and receipt of proceeds from the sale of firearms from gun buyers located in Mexico.
- 10. Defendant CRUZ RAMOS would cause payments to be made to defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ for his role in the gun trafficking conspiracy.

D. OVERT ACTS

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On or about the following dates, in furtherance of the conspiracy and to accomplish its objects, defendants CRUZ RAMOS, CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and MONTANO JIMENEZ, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, committed various overt acts within the Central District

of California, and elsewhere, including, but not limited to, the following:

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Overt Act No. 1: On March 14, 2022, in text messages, defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ sent defendant CRUZ RAMOS a photograph of an order for firearms parts, including upper receivers for AR-style firearms.

Overt Act No. 2: On April 11, 2022, in text messages, defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ sent defendant CRUZ RAMOS two photographs depicting pistols and rifles with the name of a firearms customer in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 3: On June 12, 2022, in a text message, defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ sent defendant CRUZ RAMOS a photograph depicting information for a storage unit where the co-conspirators stored firearms parts.

Overt Act No. 4: Between at least November 2022 and continuing until July 20, 2023, defendant CRUZ RAMOS controlled a social media account labeled, "Business Calls Only," and registered to a Mexican telephone number which he used to communicate with his co-conspirators, including defendants CRUZ HERNANDEZ and MONTANO JIMENEZ.

Overt Act No. 5: On December 2, 2022, in text messages using coded language, defendant CRUZ RAMOS told defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ that he had picked up firearm parts from Southern California on December 1, 2022.

Overt Act No. 6: Between December 2, 2022 and December 7, 2022, in text messages using coded language, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ coordinated defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ' pick up of additional firearm parts in the Central District of California.

Overt Act No. 7: On December 3, 2022, defendant CRUZ

HERNANDEZ picked up firearms parts from a location within the Central

District of California.

Overt Act No. 8: On December 7, 2022, at a freight forwarding company located in Canoga Park, California, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ or another co-conspirator dropped off three boxes that each contained firearms and paid for them to be shipped to a firearms customer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 9: On December 20, 2022, in a text message, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting multiple AR-15 firearm parts.

Overt Act No. 10: On January 14, 2023, in text messages, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ discussed manufacturing an AR-15-style lower receiver.

Overt Act No. 11: On February 26, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting a receipt for a wire transfer to defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ in the amount of \$2,026 that was sent Oaxaca, Mexico as payment for guns.

Overt Act No. 12: On March 15, 2023, defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ or another co-conspirator traveled from Sanger, California, to Canoga Park, California, to ship two boxes containing multiple AR-15-style firearms.

Overt Act No. 13: On March 15, 2023, at a freight forwarding company located in Canoga Park, California, defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ or another co-conspirator dropped off two boxes that each contained multiple AR-15-style firearms and paid to ship the boxes to a firearms customer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 14: On April 5, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ traveled from North Highlands, California to Canoga Park, California, transporting four boxes that each contained multiple AR-15-style rifles.

Overt Act No. 15: On April 5, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ dropped off four boxes containing firearms at a freight forwarding company located in Canoga Park, California, and paid to ship them to a firearms customer in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 16: On April 6, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ texted defendant CRUZ RAMOS photographs depicting a parcel addressed to a firearms customer in Oaxaca, Mexico and the associated invoice.

Overt Act No. 17: On or before May 11, 2023, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ packaged and concealed six AR-15-style rifles and magazines inside a parcel for shipment to a gun buyer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 18: On May 11, 2023, defendant CRUZ RAMOS and another co-conspirator traveled from Sanger, California to Los Angeles, California, to ship a box that contained six AR-15-style rifles to a firearms customer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 19: On May 11, 2023, defendant CRUZ RAMOS dropped off the box referenced in Overt Act No. 18 at a freight forwarding company located in Pacoima, California, and paid for the parcel to be shipped to a firearms customer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 20: On May 8, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ drove to Redwood City, California to purchase a cardboard box from a freight forwarding company.

Overt Act No. 21: On May 17, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ traveled from North Highland, California to Redwood City, California, transporting a box containing five AR-15-style rifles.

Overt Act No. 22: On May 17, 2023, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ dropped off the box referenced in Overt Act No. 20 containing five

Overt Act No. 23: On May 20, 2023, defendant CRUZ RAMOS texted defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting a bank deposit slip showing the deposit of ₱50,000 Mexican Pesos into a co-conspirator's account.

firearms at a freight forwarder in Redwood City, California, and paid

for it to be shipped to a gun buyer in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 24: On May 20, 2023, in response to the text message referenced in Overt Act No. 23, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ stated, "Thank you."

Overt Act No. 25: On May 23, 2023, defendant CRUZ RAMOS texted defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting a bank deposit slip showing the deposit of ₱141,000 Mexican Pesos into a co-conspirator's account.

Overt Act No. 26: On June 4, 2023, in text messages using coded language, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ told defendant CRUZ RAMOS that someone at the border wanted to buy "toys," referring to firearms.

Overt Act No. 27: On June 4, 2023, in coded text messages, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ asked defendant CRUZ RAMOS to send him photographs of the "toys" when defendant CRUZ RAMOS had them.

Overt Act No. 28: On June 4, 2023, in response to the text message referenced in Overt Act No. 27, defendant CRUZ RAMOS confirmed he would send the requested photographs.

Overt Act No. 29: On June 5, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ photographs depicting AR-15-style rifles.

Overt Act No. 30: On June 5, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ told defendant CRUZ RAMOS that he forwarded to his brother the photographs that defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent.

Overt Act No. 31: On June 6, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS provided a cell phone number he controlled to defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ and described that cell phone number as the number of the "Juana Vasquez" parcel.

Overt Act No. 32: On June 8, 2023, in a text message, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph of a bank deposit slip in the amount of \$\mathbb{P}41,000\$ Mexican Pesos into a coconspirator's account.

Overt Act No. 33: On June 14, 2023, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ traveled from Sanger, California to Los Angeles, California, transporting a cardboard box containing five AR-15-style rifles for shipping to a gun buyer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 34: On June 14, 2023, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ dropped off the box containing concealed firearms referenced in Overt Act No. 33 at a freight forwarding company located in Los Angeles, California, and paid for the parcel to be shipped to a gun buyer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 35: On June 15, 2023, in a text message, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting a fully assembled AR-15-style rifle.

Overt Act No. 36: On June 15, 2023, in response to the photograph depicting the firearm referenced in Overt Act No. 35,

defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ stated that the rifle was "chingona," or "badass."

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Overt Act No. 37: On June 15, 2023, in a text messages, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ discussed defendant CRUZ RAMOS firing several of the firearms the co-conspirators manufactured, including machineguns.

Overt Act No. 38: On June 16, 2023, in a text message, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ told defendant CRUZ RAMOS that he contacted a freight forwarding company to inquire about a gun parcel that had been shipped to Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 39: On June 16, 2023, in text messages, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and CRUZ HERNANDEZ discussed contacting a freight forwarder to get information about a parcel containing firearms.

Overt Act No. 40: On June 30, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph containing a list of names and identifiers the co-conspirators used to ship gun parcels to Mexico, and advised defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ that the list contained people being investigated by law enforcement for shipping illegal items.

Overt Act No. 41: On July 4, 2023, in a text message, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ a photograph depicting a wire transfer sent to defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ in the amount of \$1,633.65 from a gun buyer located in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 42: On July 5, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendants MONTANO JIMENEZ and CRUZ HERNANDEZ a screenshot of a news story about law enforcement intercepting a shipment of firearms wrapped in clothing.

Overt Act No. 43: On July 5, 2023, in text messages, defendants CRUZ HERNANDEZ and CRUZ RAMOS discussed how the clothing in the boxes would arrive without the firearms, but that another box containing firearms should arrive.

Overt Act No. 44: On July 6, 2023, in a text message, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ a photograph depicting a wire transfer receipt from a co-conspirator in Oaxaca, Mexico, that was sent to defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ in the amount of approximately \$1,634.

Overt Act No. 45: On July 6, 2023, in text messages, defendant CRUZ RAMOS sent defendant MONTANO JIMENEZ photographs depicting wire transfer receipts from co-conspirators in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Overt Act No. 46: On July 20, 2023, defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ possessed firearm manufacturing equipment at one of their residences located in Sanger, California.

Overt Act No. 47: On July 20, 2023, inside of a storage unit controlled by defendants CRUZ RAMOS and MONTANO JIMENEZ, the coconspirators possessed numerous firearms, including a Kalashnikov 1947, 7.62 mm rifle, bearing serial number 1972EH4389; a Century Arms, model AK-47, 7.62 mm rifle, bearing serial number SV7086669; three privately manufactured AR-15-style rifles, bearing invalid serial numbers (otherwise known as "ghost guns"); a Winchester, model 70, .243 caliber bolt action rifle, bearing serial number G323180; a CVA, model Optima Elite, .50 caliber single-shot rifle, bearing serial number 61-13-071099-06; a Glock, model 43, 9mm caliber pistol, bearing serial number ABTA325 containing six rounds of ammunition; 263 AR-15-style upper receivers; 553 AR-15-style lower receivers bearing invalid serial numbers; 383 AR-style high-capacity magazines;

more than 8,000 rounds of ammunition; and hundreds of additional firearm parts and other material used to manufacture firearms. Overt Act No. 48: On July 20, 2023, at his residence located in North Highlands, California, defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ possessed five privately manufactured AR-15-style rifles wrapped in foil and clothing in a cardboard box, ammunition, and a Hi-Point Firearms, model 995, 9mm caliber rifle, bearing serial number F198382. Overt Act No. 49: On July 21, 2023, in an intercepted telephone call, defendant CRUZ RAMOS asked another co-conspirator to check on the storage unit.

COUNT TWO

[18 U.S.C. \S 922(a)(1)(A), 2(a)]

[ALL DEFENDANTS]

Beginning on an unknown date, but no later than March 2022, and continuing to on or about July 20, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, each aiding and abetting the others, not being licensed importers, manufacturers, or dealers of firearms, willfully engaged in the business of dealing in firearms, specifically, the conduct described in Overt Acts Nos. 1 through 49 of Count One of this Indictment, which are re-alleged and incorporated here.

COUNT THREE

[18 U.S.C. §§ 922(e), 2(a)]

[ALL DEFENDANTS]

On or about March 15, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, each aiding and abetting the others, knowingly delivered and caused to be delivered to a common carrier, namely, a freight forwarding company located in Canoga Park, California, for transportation and shipment in interstate and foreign commerce, to a person other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, dealer, and collector, a package containing the following firearms, without written notice to the carrier that such firearms were being transported and shipped: multiple privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns").

COUNT FOUR

[18 U.S.C. \$ 922(e), 2(a)]

[ALL DEFENDANTS]

On or about April 5, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, each aiding and abetting the others, knowingly delivered and caused to be delivered to a common carrier, namely, a freight forwarding company located in Canoga Park, California, for transportation and shipment in interstate and foreign commerce, to a person other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, dealer, and collector, a package containing the following firearms, without written notice to the carrier that such firearms were being transported and shipped: multiple privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns").

COUNT FIVE

 $[18 \text{ U.S.C. } \S 922(e), 2(a)]$

[ALL DEFENDANTS]

On or about May 11, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, each aiding and abetting the others, knowingly delivered and caused to be delivered to a common carrier, namely, a freight forwarding company located in Pacoima, California, for transportation and shipment in interstate and foreign commerce, to a person other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, dealer, and collector, a package containing the following firearms, without written notice to the carrier that such firearms were being transported and shipped: six privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns").

COUNT SIX

2 [18 U.S.C. §§ 922(e), 2(a)]

[ALL DEFENDANTS]

On or about June 14, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendants JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ, and BERTA MONTANO JIMENEZ, each aiding and abetting the others, knowingly delivered and caused to be delivered to a common carrier, namely, a freight forwarding company located in Los Angeles, California, for transportation and shipment in interstate and foreign commerce, to a person other than a licensed importer, manufacturer, dealer, and collector, a package containing the following firearms, without written notice to the carrier that such firearms were being transported and shipped: five privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns").

COUNT SEVEN

2 [18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(5)]

[DEFENDANT CRUZ HERNANDEZ]

On or about April 5, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant DAVID CRUZ HERNANDEZ knowingly shipped firearms, namely, approximately 20 privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns"), in interstate and foreign commerce, namely, from Canoga Park, California, addressed to a recipient in Oaxaca, Mexico, and intercepted in Laredo, Texas.

Defendant CRUZ HERNANDEZ shipped such firearms knowing that he was then an alien illegally and unlawfully in the United States.

COUNT EIGHT [18 U.S.C. § 922(q)(5)][DEFENDANT CRUZ RAMOS] On or about May 11, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant JUAN CARLOS CRUZ RAMOS, also known as ("aka") "Ivan Cortes Ramirez," aka "Cornelio Ortiz Ramos," knowingly shipped firearms, namely, approximately six privately manufactured AR-style rifles, bearing no serial number (commonly referred to as "ghost guns"), in interstate and foreign commerce, namely, from Los Angeles, California, addressed to a recipient in Oaxaca, Mexico. Defendant CRUZ RAMOS shipped such firearms knowing that he was then an alien illegally and unlawfully in the United States.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

[18 U.S.C. § 924(d)(1) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c)]

1. Pursuant to Rule 32.2 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, notice is hereby given that the United States of America will seek forfeiture as part of any sentence, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(d)(1), and Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), in the event of any defendant's conviction of the offenses set forth in any of Counts Two through Eight of this

- 2. Any defendant so convicted shall forfeit to the United States of America the following:
- (a) All right, title, and interest in any firearm or ammunition involved in or used in any such offense; and
- (b) To the extent such property is not available for forfeiture, a sum of money equal to the total value of the property described in subparagraph (a).
- 3. Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p), as incorporated by Title 28, United States Code, Section 2461(c), the convicted defendant shall forfeit substitute property, up to the value of the property described in the preceding paragraph if, as the result of any act or omission of said defendant, the property described in the preceding paragraph or any portion thereof (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence; (b) has been transferred, sold to, or deposited with a third party; (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court; (d) has been

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Indictment.

substantially diminished in value; or (e) has been commingled with 1 2 other property that cannot be divided without difficulty. 3 A TRUE BILL 4 5 Foreperson 6 E. MARTIN ESTRADA 7 United States Attorney 8 MACK E. JENKINS Assistant United States Attorney 9 Chief, Criminal Division 10 Christina Shy for SMG 11 SCOTT M. GARRINGER 12 Assistant United States Attorney Deputy Chief, Criminal Division 13 BENEDETTO L. BALDING 14 Assistant United States Attorney Deputy Chief, General Crimes 15 Section 16 KELLY LAROCQUE THOMAS MAGAÑA 17 Assistant United States Attorneys General Crimes Section 18 19 20 2.1 22 23 24 25 26 27 28